



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office



Department
for International
Development

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Tareq Shrourou, Director
Claire Jeffwitz
Natalie Sedacca
Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights

by email: lpfr@live.co.uk

Dear Mr Shrourou, Mr Jeffwitz, and Ms Sedacca.

Thank you for your letter of 24 September about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

You ask for clarity on whether Government officials have sought direct dialogue with JCB and you offer the suggestion the the UK investigates and provides support for the establishment of expert and independent observation and investigation teams.

As I made clear in my previous letter to you the British Government is fully committed to the promotion of the UN Guiding Principles (UNGP) on Business & Human Rights and the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines, and we are further committed to encouraging and fostering respect for human rights among UK business. Where a company decides to trade is however a decision for each company to reach taking account of the legal and regulatory environment including international human rights law. Businesses do not have obligations to adhere to the UNGP and OECD Guidelines.

This is why In March 2016 and March 2017, the UK, along with other EU member states, abstained on the resolution at the UN Human Rights Council which called for the creation of a database of businesses that trade with settlements. The UK strongly opposed this provision and considered that it went beyond the competence of the Human Rights Council. Human rights obligations are directed at states, and not individuals or businesses, who must determine their trading relationships for themselves; as such, we have no plans to set up an equivalent database.

Ultimately, it is the decision of an individual or company whether to operate in settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The British Government neither encourages nor offers support to such activity.

We will continue to monitor developments in Khan al-Ahmar. We issued a statement on 10 September along with France, Germany, Spain and Italy reiterating our call to the Israeli Government not to go ahead with its plan to demolish the village – including its school - and displace its residents. The British Consul-General to Jerusalem visited the community on 11 September to express our concern and demonstrate international support for the community. Furthermore officials from the Consulate visited the community on 1 October. Most recently our Ambassador raised the issued with the Israeli authorities on 3 October.

1/2 1.10.04

Alistair Burt

THE RT HON. ALISTAIR BURT MP
Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa